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# ALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

1919 - 1989

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**A HISTORY  
OF THE  
CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS  
1919-1989**

**EDITED AND DESIGNED BY  
Fred Glass**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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—Fred Glass

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If the previous ten years had been traumatic for teachers and their union, the early 30s proved nearly unbearable. Added to all their other problems was the minor difficulty of national economic collapse. More than a quarter of the nation's population became unemployed in the years following the stock market crash of 1929. After Franklin D. Roosevelt's election in 1932, on a Democratic Party platform lifted plank by plank from the Socialist Party's (social security, unemployment insurance, labor law and banking reform, minimum wage, etc.) working people began to feel some hope for their future. But before the New Deal programs started to make a difference, prospects remained bleak for teachers. Speaking of the effects of the Depression in his 1935 article in *American Teacher*, "The Teacher and the Public", John Dewey explained,

# 1930s

## A "Debating Society" Struggles to Survive

Salary or wage cuts are almost universal. Multitudes of schools have been closed. Classes have been enlarged, reducing the capacity of teachers to do their work. Kindergartens and classes for the handicapped have been lopped off. Studies that are indispensable for the production of the skill and intelligence that society needs have been eliminated. The number of the unemployed has been increased in consequence, and the mass consuming power necessary for recovery has been contracted.

The lot of the teacher was worse than it had been when the AFT was formed twenty years before. But teachers were not alone. The AFL's strategy of cooperation with the employers reaped bitter fruit; its membership plunged to less than 10% of the workforce. Observers wondered whether it might not disappear altogether. The craft union orientation of the AFL was not well-suited to organizing the new mass production industries; some of its leaders'

elitist attitude toward unskilled workers ensured that these mostly immigrant and second-generation workers wouldn't become union members. AFL leaders also refused the entreaties of the more progressive unions within its ranks to try to ameliorate the lot of the unemployed.

Dissatisfaction with the lack of militancy of the AFL leadership and disagreement with its strategies led several unions, pushed by John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers, to break away from craft unionism in 1935 and found the Committee for Industrial Organization, later Congress of Industrial Organizations — the CIO. Committed to organizing the unorganized, the unskilled alongside the skilled, the unemployed as well as working people, and to a model of militant, bottom-up action, the CIO unions helped support a wave of militancy that created the modern American labor movement. The passage of the National Labor Relations Act, or Wagner Act (1935), giving workers the legal right to organize and form unions, opened the floodgates, pushing the AFL into organizing, too.

The AFT debated leaving the relatively conservative AFL for the militant CIO, with some locals — such as New York's Local 5 and Los Angeles' new Local 430 — establishing independent contacts and joint activities with local CIO unions. The national AFT, however, after protracted debates in conventions and in the pages of *American Teacher*, decided that its best course of action was to work for unity of the two labor federations from within the AFL.

The discussions within the AFT must be understood in context. The Depression led many Americans to conclude that the capitalist system had failed. Before revelations had reached these shores about life under Stalin, the Soviet Union seemed to offer a rational alternative. The Communist Party attracted intellectuals and workers by the thousands, and like the IWW before it, influenced the thinking and actions of

many more. From the mid 30s to the late 40s ardent defenders of civil liberties, militant unionists and other activists in progressive movements joined or worked with the Communists (and Socialists and Trotskyists) because they spoke out and acted against injustice and in favor of a better world for all.

In the AFT political divisions between liberal, bread-and-butter unionists in Chicago and the Midwest and their more leftwing, ideologically-inclined counterparts in New York and Philadelphia nearly tore apart the union. The battle over CIO affiliation was but one consequence of this political split within the AFT.

Despite its internal conflicts the national teachers' union made slow but steady progress throughout the 30s. Tenure, salary and the fight against cutbacks were again leading issues for the AFT, and its stands on these matters helped raise its membership from 7,000 to 32,000 (mostly in New York and Chicago). The AFT, in fact, despite its modest size, found itself at the center of the struggle over education in many localities, since boards of education, with the hand of chambers of commerce behind them, sought to cut programs, and labor councils were needed to counterbalance the struggle. The small teachers' unions were well-placed to bring the rest of labor into the ballgame.

As for tenure, an editorial in the November/December 1936 *American Teacher* declared it to be "the chief problem before us at the present time", stating that "It precedes even salaries and academic freedom since tenure is a prerequisite for both." At the end of 1936, 27 states, accounting for over 50% of all teachers nationally, still had yearly individual contracts for teachers or *no contracts at all*. The AFT passed resolutions at its conventions, got labor to do the same, built educational coalitions and pressured local and state legislatures to pass tenure laws. It also drafted model tenure language and

offered its assistance to locals and state groups of teachers.

As in the 20s, another central concern was the defense of academic freedom. The legal defense case of Morris U. Schappes in New York helped spark membership growth in Local 5 among college professors, even while that local was in turmoil over internal politics. The president of the national AFT during the mid to late 30s, Jerome Davis, was fired from his professor's post at Yale University after teaching there for 12 years for his union activities and left-wing political sympathies. His defense campaign brought protests from the NEA, AAUP, and Progressive Education Association against Yale, which finally responded by paying him an extra year's salary. (It didn't rehire him, however.) The 1936 AFT convention featured a debate and resolution condemning loyalty oaths as a condition of employment; so much attention was devoted to the issue that it became the theme of the meeting.

In cities where cutbacks, large pay cuts, payment in scrip and delayed checks were common, teachers flocked to the union. The New York local grew from 1500 to 4200 in just over six months despite a split that lost several hundred members. A separate local of Works Progress Administration (WPA) adult education teachers, with a membership of 2500, was organized rapidly at about



*Noble sentiments from American School Board Journal, December '32*

the same time. WPA teachers were usually public school teachers on welfare.

These successes led the newly-hatched House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), led by Martin Dies, to turn its baleful eye on teachers union activities in 1938. This variation of the recurrent Red Scare, less effective than either the earlier Palmer or later McCarthy versions, nevertheless kept the AFT and other progressive organizations busy defending their basic constitutional rights. The difference between this and other Red Scares was the steadily growing strength of the labor movement, backed by the ability of the liberal New Deal administration to defend its allies.

### The CSFT

In marked contrast to the AFT's growth in the Midwest and East Coast was stagnation in California. A measure



of the poor shape of the CSFT comes to us via a report on the semi-annual meeting of the organization in 1932. Recounting the visit of the AFT national Executive Secretary, Florence Hanson, to the state federation meeting, the report tells us that

The widespread demand for economy, the weight of the depression, coupled by an insidious public press attack had discouraged all but the leaders of the few locals that have weathered the storm; but with the coming of Mrs. Hanson to San Francisco a new spirit has been engendered; hope has revived; a re-awakened interest sprang to life, and many cities called for the charmed voice, the magic touch of our National Executive Secretary.

Apparently this "new spirit" didn't last long, for in CSFT secretary Anne Dart's *American Teacher* article on "Tenure in California" in March-April 1936 we find a similar celebration of 'renewal':

We are very hopeful of our situation in California. Some of us have clamored rather loudly for the State Federation of Teachers to get into action again. Our state convention was a success, and we now have in California eight locals. We have banded together in the tenure fight the bravest and most knowing school men and women in California, all of whom enjoy the "storm and stress" of fighting things to the finish. We know that academic freedom, organization, and tenure are all parts of the same struggle toward a better life for all workers.

The deaths and births of the CSFT followed upon one another in increasingly rapid succession; by the September/October *American Teacher* the journal was able to report once more that "The California State Federation of

Teachers has been reborn and is now living an active career." We may infer from these repeated protestations of health that the patient was in serious trouble. During this period there were no regular statewide publications; no records come down to us of CSFT presidents between 1933 and 1939; and by 1940 the national organization was warning the CSFT that it was in danger of losing its charter for lack of enough active locals.

All was not quiet, however. The national struggle conducted by the AFT for tenure included skirmishes in California. In each legislative session, anti-labor forces introduced bills to roll back the 1921 tenure law, already weakened in 1927 (with California Teachers Association approval) to exclude teachers in districts with less than 850 average daily attendance. In 1933 a provision was added to the law allowing teachers to be dismissed for "criminal syndicalism", which, two years before the passage of the Wagner Act, essentially meant union activities. The weakened state of the CSFT, and the willingness of the CTA to wage battles against union-sponsored amendments to strengthen tenure (1936), resulted in short careers for many teachers.

One cause that did manage to ignite statewide support and galvanize a CSFT struggle was the case of Eureka teacher Victor Jewett. A member of the CTA (and later, AFT Local 349), he had received excellent evaluations throughout his five-year career as a social studies teacher. Then he committed the crime of "unprofessional conduct". The evidence of Jewett's unfitness to teach were: his expression, both within and outside of

school, of his opposition to war; his condemnation of William Randolph Hearst's "Buy American" campaign; and use of *The Nation*, *New Republic* and *Living Age* magazines as references in his class. But by far the blackest mark against him was his support of a local lumber workers strike. In a caustic article printed in the AFT's national press, Jewett ridiculed the hypocritical type of "professionalism" espoused by his enemies, and delineated the reasons why true professionalism lies in teacher organization.

After he was fired by the Board of Education, he filed suit, and the Superior Court upheld his dismissal. His own organization, the CTA, disavowed him, and Jewett reported that "calumny against me has been spread by officials of that association." The CSFT organized a defense committee, raised money, and hired an attorney for him. AFL unions, along with AFT locals from around the country, provided funds to appeal the Superior Court decision. The Education

Association and its affiliates were finally pressured into lending assistance to Jewett's cause. Ultimately, however, Jewett lost his appeal.

The CSFT was generally less than the sum of its parts in these years. California had its regional counterparts to the academic luminaries associated with the AFT back east, notably Professors Ernest Hilgard of Stanford and J. Robert Oppenheimer of UC Berkeley. Hilgard, chair

of the Psychology Department at Stanford and author of an important work on hypnosis, served as president of his local in the late 30s. The physicist Oppenheimer, later to head the top secret Manhattan Project that developed



Dr. Ernest Jack Hilgard

the nuclear bomb during World War II, was at least an activist and possibly local president as well. Despite such distinguished assistance, no individual took responsibility for steering the CSFT through its rough times.

A few locals sustained the thin statewide presence of the union. Local 31 published a regular newsletter, *The Teachers' Voice*, and its pamphlet "Organized Labor, Staunch Friend of the Schools" was reprinted by the *American Teacher*. It generally functioned as the lobbying arm of the state federation throughout the 20s and 30s. The San Francisco Federation of Teachers Local 61 maintained a lobbyist in Sacramento to augment the efforts of Local 31 in the early 30s, until declining membership forced them to discontinue the practice. Local 61 also broadcast a weekly radio program, and led the efforts to defend tenure in San Francisco. The union played a vigorous role in protecting the raises teachers won in 1930 against continuous efforts to cut salaries throughout the Depression.

Within its limited means, the CSFT worked to organize new locals. During the 30s fourteen locals were chartered, of which six survived into the next decade. One of the most significant occurrences for the CSFT was the founding in 1935 of a viable local in Los Angeles. The CSFT was determined to open Los Angeles, with the largest school system in the state, to teacher unionism. An earlier union, Local 77, had never managed to gain more than a few dozen adherents. Despite several trips south by CSFT's second president, E. J. Dupuy, in the early 20s, enthusiasm for labor affiliation did not overtake the L.A. teachers. Local 77 succumbed to continuous attacks by the School Board, aided by redbaiting editorials in the notoriously anti-union *Los Angeles Times*.

Local 430 was chartered under different circumstances: with the support of a rising labor movement and amid increasing dissatisfaction among L.A.

teachers with their several clubs and associations. It went on record opposing the dismissal of some teachers, and succeeded — with labor assistance — in reversing one dismissal. As a result of the celebrated Chaney case, in which two teachers fired for activism in the peace movement and the teachers' union were rehired, the local also got the School Board to rescind an old Palmer-era prohibition against teachers joining unions. Nonetheless, Local 430 did not grow like a prairie fire. Teachers in Los Angeles chose AFT membership almost exclusively out of ideological commitment. While its membership rose to over 100 within a few years, making it the largest at the time in the CSFT, that wasn't saying much, especially in a school district with over 11,000 teachers.

But the formation of the L.A. local did have its impact on the CSFT. Recognizing that the weaknesses of the state organization hurt the locals, Local 430 helped push the CSFT to meet regularly in the latter half of the 30s. Local 430 members became state officers and infused new blood into an all but defunct outfit. This is probably the meaning of at least the last of the reiterated statements of "new life" for the CSFT cited earlier. In return, in the late 30s the CSFT helped raise funds to support defense cases for L.A. teachers.

But the overall picture was not bright. Of the 42,000 teachers employed in California in 1939, 37,000 belonged to the CTA. In many districts CTA membership was a prerequisite for teaching, and it was expected that your first month's salary be paid to the CTA as price for the privilege of becoming a member of the "profession." None of these extenuating circumstances, however, was of much consolation to the members of the CSFT, which in the Depression decade had advanced only marginally from 300 members in 1930 to somewhat less than 500 in 1939. Under these conditions the statewide teachers'

union was functionally, in the words of several participants of the time, little more than a debating society.



# 1940s

## The War and Its Aftermath

The early years of the War decade found the CSFT struggling much as it had in the past, although with the benefit of hindsight we can see the first signs of change in the air. While for three years — 1941-44 — there was no official AFT state federation in California, local activities did not come to a halt. The labor movement was seemingly stronger than it had ever been. As a result of its militant pre-war organizing, more workers belonged to unions than at any point previously. Agreements between major corporations and labor — facilitated by the government — had achieved union shop agreements and automatic dues check-offs in return for a "no-strike" pledge for the duration of the war. Thus the atmosphere for union organizing had become quite different from the AFT's earliest days.

The national AFT was at last gathering a real head of steam. In 1943 the national union reported that it had just experienced its greatest growth spurt in over twenty years. It was using its new-found strength to play a greater role within the AFL nationally and to fund heightened organizing campaigns. Officially it came out against the witchhunts of the Dies Committee, although internally there was a growing movement against Communist influence, which resulted in the expulsion of the New York and Philadelphia locals in 1941. Despite these traumas, the union continued to grow during the war.

Meanwhile, the California Federation actually lost members. By 1941 the CSFT spoke for a mere 250 members. National Secretary-Treasurer Irvin Kuenzli complained in a letter to CSFT Secretary May Kirkham in January that the money spent organizing in California over the past few years far exceeded the per-capita dues payments to the national; membership had decreased by nearly 100 teachers. By the end of the year AFT revoked the charter of the CSFT for

maintaining less than the required five locals in good standing.

After the start of the war, San Francisco Federation president Ed Gallagher explained to the national office that transportation was difficult in such a large state, and the war had drained off members to service. Apparently, factionalism and personality conflicts between local leaders hadn't helped matters any, either. In a letter to the CSFT's locals, which had by now grown again to nine, Gallagher pleaded for renewed coordination. He asked Local 31's Ruth Dodds, a national AFT vice president, to assist his efforts in pulling the CSFT back together. Although Gallagher and Dodds personally didn't get along, by July of 1944 Dodds had submitted the necessary local letters to the national AFT, and the CSFT, with a new charter, had another lease on life.

With such a small statewide membership, it makes sense that much of the organization's energies went into coalition work with the rest of the labor movement. Yet there was a surprising amount of local activism as well. In 1940 Local 430 successfully fought against pay cuts, and in the same year achieved a restoration of the jobs of the Chaney's, two union teachers who had been fired for their political activities. Palo Alto Local 442 was a strong participant in the Co-op movement, extremely popular in California; Palo Alto member Joel Berreman, of Stanford University, became the CSFT's first president of the decade. The Sacramento local waged a winning struggle for sabbatical leave pay. Just before Pearl Harbor, the CSFT presidency moved south, with Frank C. Davis of UCLA, Local 430, picking up the torch.

Local activism, however, couldn't overcome the essentially poor state of affairs in the CSFT, attested to by a laconic summary in *American Teacher*: "A report on a program of action and policy to justify the federation's existence and provide for an extension of its influence was the basis of much of the

convention's discussion." The delegates also promised one another that four issues of a state newsletter, to be named *California Teacher*, would appear each year. (The promise was not to be fulfilled until 1948.)

There were some significant energies expended, if not well-coordinated, around curricular issues. In California, as across the rest of the country, school boards in many districts caved in to conservative pressures to ban a series of social studies textbooks, *Progressive Education*, by Harold Rugg, which had been in common usage. Under the banner of academic freedom, Locals 61 and 430 drummed up considerable labor support in the losing effort. The CSFT lodged protests with local and state politicians, to no avail.

After 1941, AFT locals in the Bay Area and in Los Angeles worked to support the war effort and various social issues. Members of the San Francisco local donated a day's salary to the city's War Chest. Local 430 activist Abraham Minkus was appointed chair of a district-wide committee convened by the Board to study interracial relations in the school district, which led to Board-approved in-service and education programs.

The late 40s saw a war within labor that cut across the lines of the AFL/CIO split, in which the right and left wings of the movement fought to the death. As a result of the Cold War, labor became a target for a resurgent national conservatism. The Taft-Hartley Act passed in 1947 over Truman's veto, effectively crippling the labor movement by preventing it

from utilizing its militant organizing tactics of the previous decade. Taft-Hartley also mandated loyalty affidavits for union officers which affirmed non-membership in the Communist Party. Rather than face investigation by HUAC and other crusading governmental bodies, the leadership of the AFL and the CIO offered to "clean house" themselves. Many unions were expelled from the CIO for alleged communist domination, and AFL unions suffered upheaval and internal witchhunts.

In 1948 the CIO purged its public employee union, which had given shelter to the expelled AFT locals from the East Coast. HUAC hearings connected with the CIO action dragged out the old AFT

schism, casting a shadow on teachers everywhere. Compounding matters, teacher strikes led to legislative reprisals, calling for loyalty oaths, jail terms for strikers, and investigations of "subversives." AFT faced an uncertain future.

This is the background for the story of Los Angeles Local 430 in the second half of the World War II decade, a story which contains many of the elements of a tragedy. The CSFT's largest local had achieved some notable successes, winning a few important teacher defense battles, gaining substantial amounts of new members and earning the accolades of the national AFT in 1946 for its good work. By 1948 the Los Angeles Local had absorbed a couple of smaller teacher associations and its membership topped 800. Its president, Harold Orr, had been elected president of the CSFT in 1946 and reelected twice. Under his leadership the statewide organization was growing, with several locals in northern California pushing over 100 members and new activists and leaders emerging among them. (One of these, Ed Ross, president of Alameda County local 771, had barely lost the election against Orr for president of the CSFT at its 1947 convention.) At Orr's urging, the number of locals paying per capita dues to labor councils and the California Labor Federation increased from four to eleven; and a statewide organizing fund was established for the first time in years.

As occurred after the first World War, the influx of returning veterans in 1945-6 helped drive membership numbers upward; so Orr's leadership was not the only

LOS ANGELES FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Local 430  
American Federation of Teachers  
Station H, Box 816, Los Angeles, Calif.

March 1945

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The Teachers' Union wishes to express its deep appreciation for the complete support, without a dissenting vote, given it by the delegates to the UAFL in the selection of Board of Education candidates.

We urge your vigorous support for UAFL-recommended candidates Catherine E. Breslin, George E. Elliott and Faye E. Allen.

The UAFL took "no action" on a fourth candidate, inasmuch as we were not then prepared to make a fourth proposal. At this time, however, we wish to urge every labor group to complete its ticket with John W. Baldwin, a man who had an excellent record as personnel director of the schools from 1932-1935, who is a friend of organized labor, and who is at present a geological engineer.

For a Better Board of Education, vote for Allen, Baldwin, Breslin and Elliott.

Fraternally,

Harold L. Orr, President  
Amer. Fed. of Teachers, #430, AFL

P.S. Please check action taken by your group on the enclosed card and return.

Letter from Harold Orr to Los Angeles AFL's political action organization in happier days.

factor in CSFT growth. Nor was Orr's style of leadership without problems for organizing Los Angeles teachers. In a district of 11,000 teachers, the overwhelming majority were not impelled to flock into the arms of the AFT in any case. Orr and his group practiced a highly politicized brand of unionism, characterized by an increasing sharpness of tone as the immediate postwar years grew less hospitable to the liberal-left coalition that had held together within many unions for a decade. There were teachers who, open to a bread-and-butter unionism, failed to appreciate the nuances of the connection between their daily classroom lives and "the deleterious effects of the Truman Doctrine on the class struggle in Europe" — a typical discussion topic at local 430 meetings. In addition, some members complained of Orr's "heavy gavel" at the local's meetings, making it difficult for opposing points of view to carry the field.

In 1947 Los Angeles teacher Walter Thomas helped found an opposition caucus to Orr's group of left-leaning officers and activists. That year Thomas ran and lost against Orr for the Local 430 presidency. The following year Thomas' caucus raised the money to send him to the AFT national convention, where he made a presentation to the Executive Council claiming voting irregularities in the election. He also asserted that Orr's group was following the Communist Party line in its decisionmaking, and acting in a generally undemocratic fashion.

The national AFT Executive Council decided an investigation was in order, not only of local 430 but also of San Francisco Local 61 at the same time. In San Francisco the local had had long-standing connections with the California Labor School, an independent labor studies center with classes on economics, politics, parliamentary procedure, labor history and collective bargaining. It had hosted an official reception of visiting

union leaders from around the world during balmy times for U.S.-Soviet relations, the 1946 United Nations meetings in San Francisco. This was now held against it; and the San Francisco Labor Council, formerly friendly to the school, was warning its locals that the school was Communist-controlled.

Following the investigation of the locals, the national AFT ordered San Francisco to sever its relationship with the California Labor School or face expulsion. After initial resistance, the local gave in to pressure from the national AFT, the San Francisco Labor Council, local politicians and George Meany himself, putting its members on notice they were no longer to support or teach at the School. The local remained in good standing.

Local 430 didn't fare so well. The national Executive Council found that the local was guilty of six charges. Interestingly enough, the voting irregularity accusation was not one of these. Four of the charges were quite vague, e.g., "The AFT in Los Angeles was in general disrepute", and "Publications of Local 430 were undignified and discreditable." Of the two findings with substance, one determined that the local had cooperated with a CIO union, directly ignoring AFL directives. The other determination was the key: that the Los Angeles teachers union refused to take action in support of Section 9, Article 3, of the AFT constitution (barring membership to Fascists, Nazis and Communists). Since no one was accusing the local of harboring Fascists or Nazis, the inference was unmistakable.

The charter of the Los Angeles Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 430, was revoked outright, and the local expelled from the AFT. The Thomas group became the charter members of the new Los Angeles Teachers Union, AFT Local 1021. Orr and his associates were refused access to the pages of *American Teacher* to explain their side of the story, and told to come to the next

convention and appeal the decision, as provided for in the AFT constitution. They sent a representative, whose arguments failed to persuade the delegates; the resolution upholding the Executive Council's decision was supported by a roll call vote of 792-108, and Local 430 was no more.

Over 100 members and friends of the new local 1021 came to the chartering ceremony in October 1948, which received a fair amount of positive press. In attendance along with the new president, Joseph Voorhees, were local union and political leaders, including Roy Brewer, national Vice-President of IATSE, who had made his career by redbaiting and helping to break left-leaning unions in Hollywood. Over time Voorhees, anxious to disassociate the LATU from its predecessor's "red" public image, appeared before legislative committees to divulge what he knew about Orr and Local 430. This was part of a long-term effort by Local 1021 to remove the taint of Communism from teacher unionism in Los Angeles.

Within five years many of the former leaders of Local 430 were no longer teaching, having been fired by the School Board for taking the Fifth Amendment at HUAC hearings, to which they had been summoned after being named by another teacher as Communists. The LAFT attempted to join the CIO, but was thwarted by United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, who said that teachers belonged in the AFL. The former local persisted in a non-affiliated existence, coming to Board meetings and publishing a newsletter until the mid-50s.

Strains between the new local and the state organization were evident from the outset. The CSFT found itself at end of the 40s with a membership less than half of what it was previous to Local 430's expulsion. For not only did they lose several hundred teachers in Los Angeles; the Cold War atmosphere — like the Palmer period in the 20s —

made teachers think twice about joining any union. In Los Angeles the new union struggled with problems from both ends of the political spectrum: old 430 members loyal to the vanquished LAFT held aloof from Local 1021 because the new union was on the wrong side in the Cold War; while most teachers stayed away in droves because 1021 was still an AFT local, and too radical by definition. Membership numbers dipped in many CSFT locals in 1948-49, but Los Angeles suffered the most.

With Orr gone, Ed Ross became president of the CSFT. CSFT leaders, including Ross, found themselves in a difficult position. Whatever differences they may have had with Local 430 leaders' politics, many of them personally liked and respected the Los Angeles teachers for having pulled the organization back together. A north-south split emerged along the lines of primary allegiance to the CSFT (north) and to the national AFT (south).

Another division opened up between the large locals (primarily Los Angeles and San Francisco) and small locals, relating to per capita obligations to the CSFT. Local 1021 kept lines of communication open to the national organization; but mutual distrust conspired with geography to keep the CSFT divided.

Ross did what he could to remedy the situation. Developing the most extensive organizing plan yet by the CSFT, he raised \$2500 from the California

Labor Federation and from the AFT to organize in both ends of the state. He got the AFT to send out national staffer Victoria Almon to assist. Ten thousand letters were sent to California teachers. The long-promised CSFT newsletter, *California Teacher*, first saw its mimeographed light of day in August

without spectacular success to mend fences with Local 1021. He also presented two important resolutions at the California Labor Federation convention. One established labor-funded scholarships for high school students, a program that, much expanded, remains in place to this day. With the other resolution, all AFL

unions in California condemned special loyalty oaths as a condition of employment for teachers. In his role as a working teacher who somehow created room in the rest of his life to represent the interests of all California teachers, he prefigured the vision and activism of CSFT's famous president of the next decade, Ben Rust.



—from Local 1021's wholesome *The Union Teacher*, v.1 No.1, September 1949

1948, edited by CSFT secretary Emma Brubaker. It has managed to maintain regular publication ever since.

Ross himself, a full-time classroom teacher, found the time and means to go from city to city to encourage teachers to organize, the union paying only for his expenses (and sometimes not even that). He was re-elected at the November 1949 convention, and during his full term helped eight more locals to come into being. He worked thanklessly and



# United Teachers of Los Angeles

## AFT Local 1021 Chartered 1949

Local 1021, the largest AFT local in the State of California, has a proud history. Its development may be divided into four distinct epochs.

The first AFT local in Los Angeles was Local 77 founded in 1919. This local struggled to keep afloat in a sea of anti-unionism in Los Angeles. The CFT was born in the same year and included only seven locals. Local 77 did not last through the 1930s.

In 1935 Local 430 was formed and received its AFT charter. By 1939 Local 430 was the largest local in the CFT and played a major role in teacher union issues. It was active in the Central Labor Council and worked to restore pay cuts to teachers. It also was concerned with teacher involvement in curriculum, policy formation, and control at the school site level. The local was very active in school board elections, teacher rights defense causes and important social

brought to the attention of the 1948 AFT convention by Walter Thomas. This prompted an investigation of Local 430 by the AFT Executive Council. The Washington Teachers Union and San Francisco Local 61 were also examined. The Council had previously investigated locals in New York and Cleveland.

Local 430's charter was revoked in 1949 for the following reasons:

- ...The conduct of the local had brought AFT into disrepute;
- ...The local had not functioned in harmony with the policies and principles of the AFT; and
- ...The local had dissipated its energies "in agitation and politics unconnected with union objectives"

Thus, the largest AFT local in California was put to death. The President of Local 430, who was also the President of the CFT, was defeated for reelection in 1949. The problem of promoting the Communist Party line rather than organizing and promoting bona fide trade unions was not unique to Los Angeles, the state of California, or the AFT.

Historians may argue whether revocation of 430's charter was justified and may question whether communist control of the leadership of this local was an accomplished fact. The circumstances surrounding this series of events should be known so that the necessary lesson is learned that policies and programs that disaffect members and the public undermine unionism. The problems of the teamsters' public image attests to this problem that has hurt all trade unions.

The teachers in Los Angeles formed another AFT local and the AFT Executive Council chartered it as Local 1021. This was the third stage in teacher unionism in Los Angeles. Local 1021 started with a membership of about 200 members. The first two presidents were Joe Voorhees and Walt Thomas. Other early leaders include Linnea

Alexander, Kay Bell, Blanche Garrison and Hy Weintraub. The unit had a hard time in its infancy and it had to contest a virulent anti-union atmosphere in education and a school administration that fostered membership of "their" teachers in the association which was controlled by those same CTA administrators.

The local blithely ignored its miniscule size in a district of some 15,000 teachers and addressed issues as if it were a majority. It took strong stands on every issue concerning teachers and yet gained very few members. Upon the advice of Carl Megel, National AFT president, the local began a newspaper edited by Eddie Irwin. In 1958 Eddie Irwin was elected President of the local. He turned over the editorship to Bob Crain who was the editor through 1963. In the mid 1950s the President of the local was Martin Kaufman and Hank Zivetz was the Executive Secretary. Hank Zivetz had been hired as the first paid Executive Secretary in 1956 as membership gained ground. His firebrand organizing techniques and inflammatory speeches added many new members. However, the most significant growth in membership occurred in 1958 when Local 1021 negotiated the Kaiser Health Plan for its members. Eddie Irwin, Hank Zivetz, Vice President Harold Garvin, and Evelyn Carstens, the moving force behind the negotiations, were responsible for bringing this exclusive plan to Local 1021. Evelyn Carstens, chair of the local's Health and Welfare committee was an integral part of the leadership in the 1950s and 1960s. She was much beloved for her untiring efforts to gain health and welfare benefits for the members of this local and all teachers in the district.

With the use of this Kaiser Health Plan as an organizing tool, membership quickly grew to over three thousand members by the end of 1959. The power and prestige of Local 1021 grew with the help of those mentioned previously and Hy Weintraub and Hy Gottof as the local's representatives to the L.A. Board of Education. Hank Zivetz made a major effort to help pass AB 607, a collective bargaining law, in 1959-1960. Eddie



From top left: Jim Strong, Eddie Irwin, Joe Voorhees.  
From bottom left: Hank Clarke, Bob Holcomb

issues such as equality of opportunity for students regardless of race. The local grew rapidly and reached a membership of about one thousand teachers in 1946.

Local 430's leadership in the mid to late 1940s changed and the local's policy emphasis began to focus on social and international issues. The shift was



Irwin was elected a national AFT Vice President and served in that capacity for ten years. As national Vice President Irwin helped funnel funds and organizing efforts into California. The "Union Teacher," a four-page tabloid, set the foundation for future growth. It presented the news that the other local organizations didn't talk about: issues of class size, dictatorial administrators, unfairness, freedom of speech, discipline from the teacher's point of view, and reports of L.A. Board of Education actions.

Other issues centered around Board of Education elections. The Board was controlled almost completely by the then-ultra conservative *L.A. Times*. It practiced slanted journalism and lavished coverage on their hand-picked incumbents. Here though, the association, recognizing the necessity of the support of organized labor, joined a community-based coalition, including labor. Along with the AFT, the Association provided money and manpower to defeat the *Times* and install members more favorable to education.

In 1957, censorship reared its ugly head (and remains an issue today). The Board threatened to censor the "Union Teacher" which had been delivered to teachers in their boxes in school mail. The most curious attempt by the Board was designed to prevent the printing of an article that drew a comparison of the problems that Admiral Rickover might incur if he had to deal with the L.A. Board instead of the U.S. Navy. The administration viewed this as an attack on Admiral Rickover and the entire United States Navy. The Admiral wrote the union that he understood the article to be a spoof directed at the administrators who ran the schools and not an attack on him. His letter was printed in the paper.

The struggle to gain collective bargaining was a major thrust of the union in the late 1950s until 1969. Local 1021 lobbied the Legislature and wrote articles in the "Union Teacher". A petition drive to achieve collective bargaining collected over ten thousand signatures. However, collective bargaining didn't become an actuality until the late 1970s.

The organizing efforts of Local 1021 took new shape in 1962 when Roger

Thomas, son of Walt Thomas, was named Executive Secretary. An area representative organizing plan was instituted and the following members became Area Representatives: Farrel Broslawsky, Mervyn Dymally (later to become an Assemblymember), Willard Hastings, Jack Hutton, Al Poppen. This system continued for some time.

In 1964, the Community College members organized a new Los Angeles local. It was called the L.A. College Guild Local 1521. Eddie Irwin resigned as president of Local 1021 and became the first elected president of 1521. Hy Weintraub and Farrell Broslawsky, the 1021 Vice-President, became members of 1521, as did many other 1021 union activists. Hank Zivetz assumed the presidency of Local 1021, Jean Thompson became Executive Secretary and Larry Sibelman was the new Vice President.

From 1966 to 1969 Larry Sibelman served as President and Roger Segure as Executive Secretary. Roger served many years as the local's Grievance Chairperson and today remains Director of Grievances for UTLA.

UTLA Local 1021 was born of a merger of AFT Local 1021 and ACTLA. The Association of Classroom Teachers of Los Angeles was a result of a number of mergers of various associations. It had a membership exceeding 17,000 members. AFT Local 1021 had a membership of between 2,000 and 3,000 members. The merged organization was named United Teachers, Los Angeles with a NEA/CTA local and an AFT/CFT local. UTLA 1021 was the AFT/CFT local. The merger was ratified by a vote of the members in February of 1970.

This new hybrid called UTLA was the first AFT and NEA affiliated union in the United States. After twenty years it remains the only merged AFT/NEA affiliated union. Other merged local and state unions/associations have been failures. This included New York (NYSUT) and the Florida Education Association which became AFT units and Hawaii State Teachers Association which became a NEA unit. The merger has worked extremely well and a vast majority of the twenty-two thousand members know they are UTLA members

but can't tell whether they are affiliated with the AFT or NEA. It took many far-sighted leaders to put this merged union together. Some of the AFT leaders were Dave Selden, George Brickhouse, Raoul Teilhet, Larry Sibelman and Roger Segure.

Among others, the Association leaders were Bob Ransome, Don Baer, Bill Lambert and Bob Sanders.

The first major act of UTLA was a strike in April of 1970 to gain a contract. This strike lasted for over twenty days and resulted in an outstanding contract that was negated by the courts. A large number of members quit UTLA over the strike action. UTLA lost about five



*Hank Zivetz, left, and former Supreme Court justice and US Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg*

thousand members almost all of whom were originally ACTLA. The AFT leaders were the principal actors in the strike. A majority of strike cluster leaders were 1021 members. From that strike forward UTLA Local 1021-affiliated membership grew faster than Association membership.

The first two Presidents of UTLA were Association leaders while the last three were AFT-affiliated members: Hank Springer was an AFT leader who was UTLA President from 1976 to 1980, while Judy Solkovits was UTLA President from 1980 to 1984, national AFT Vice President and CFT Vice President. Our current President is Wayne Johnson who has been serving in this capacity since 1984.

UTLA Local 1021 Presidents have been Larry Sibelman, Judy Solkovits and Michael Bennett, and since 1984 Marv Katz. Marv Katz was recently elected national AFT Vice President. He has also served since 1985 as CFT Vice President. Day Higuchi, UTLA Local 1021 Vice

President, also serves as a CFT Vice President.

UTLA Local 1021 is today the largest AFT local west of the Mississippi River with about five thousand five hundred members and is one of the fifteen largest AFT Locals in the United States. UTLA is the second largest teachers union in the United States exclusively serving teachers. UTLA has its own bi-weekly tabloid newspaper, lobbyist, print shop, television facilities, and a political action committee with a core of 500 precinct walkers and the ability to raise a quarter of a million dollars a year in campaign money. UTLA has become a political powerhouse in local and state politics.

Since Marv Katz became president in 1984, UTLA Local 1021 has been very active in the California Federation of Teachers. Unfortunately previous local presidents weren't as active in CFT affairs which hurt the effectiveness of the CFT. As UTLA Local 1021 is the largest local in the CFT, its participation in the organization makes the CFT stronger. Marv Katz has been active in CFT for almost twenty years and believes in a strong viable CFT as a vehicle to improve education in California.

The greatest problem that confronted this local was an internal one revolving around a conflict between leaders on affiliation questions. The membership was unconcerned about affiliation questions from the beginning of the 1970s. Gradually, the leadership, too, became mostly unconcerned about affiliation questions. Voting patterns in citywide elections for non-affiliate officers are of little consequence. A majority of

the officers and area chairs are original Local 1021 members, a pattern that has existed for the last ten years.

Educational, political, social, and economic issues are the major concerns of UTLA and 1021. The educational issues of teacher empowerment and educational reform have been important to the classroom teachers of Los Angeles.



*1021 President Larry Sibelman speaking to press during 1970 strike. CFT president Raoul Teilbet at his left*

Of course teacher rights and working conditions are issues fought for by the union since its inception. We have been fighting for these through our political action arm called PACE (Political Action Council of Educators), as well as through contract bargaining demands.

Social issues such as integration/desegregation in the 1970s and 1980s as well as policies toward immigrants have occupied our finances, energy and time. Foreign policy in Latin America as well as human rights worldwide have played a prominent role in our activities. Bilingual education has become a major organizational concern in the last few years. It seems that the same basic issues and problems in variant forms have to be faced at all times and places, although not always at the same intensive level.

This union has an outstanding legislative program in Sacramento. We have passed into law a paperwork Bill, teacher suspension Bill, school discipline

Bill, and had vetoed by the Governor in 1988 a significant retirement Bill. In the last few years, UTLA has stopped a great deal of legislation harmful to teachers and education. Bill Lambert, our Director of Governmental Affairs, has led these efforts.

Our Communications Department, headed by Catherine Carey, has won many honors for our bi-weekly tabloid newspaper and our pioneering productions in the use of television programming on cassettes. We have won more awards than any other local or state organization/federation in the AFT-NEA. We have won two awards from the AFL-CIO's International Labor Communications Association for our newspaper and media programming. The L.A. Press Club has named the "United Teacher," the best labor newspaper in Los Angeles. Helen Bernstein has played a vital role in our media programming.

UTLA membership has grown by five thousand over the last four years and 1021 has accounted for one third of that amount. This has occurred as a result of membership drives and our success at the bargaining table. Our members have had a raise each year averaging almost eight percent in the last four years as well as improvements in fringe benefits and working conditions. UTLA/UTLA Local 1021 is a vital, growing teachers union that continually strives to meet goals of teachers. We need to organize and bring into our union classified workers not already organized by other unions. Our Local 1021 Executive Board consists of: Marv Katz, President; Day Higuchi, Vice President; Stan Malin, Treasurer; Jerry Solender, Secretary; Pat Stanyo, Greg Solkovits, Pat Trivers, Edgar Cowan, and Dale Johnson.

(Eddie Irwin, Marv Katz, contributors)